

## **Q&A ABOUT THE CIVIL GRAND JURY (from the Superior Court website<sup>1</sup>)**

### **1) What is the Civil Grand Jury?**

The Civil Grand Jury has a significant function to investigate county, city, and joint-power agencies. It acts in a watchdog capacity, by examining carefully and completely, the operations of various government agencies within Los Angeles County. The Civil Grand Jury cannot investigate state or federal agencies as they lie outside their jurisdiction. Part of the investigation of governmental agencies includes the ability to audit operations, accounts and records of officers and departments within the agency under investigation. The Civil Grand Jury is further charged with investigating individual complaints from citizens. By statute the Grand Jury is required to inquire regarding the conditions and management of all public prisons within the County of Los Angeles.

### **2) What is the term of service?**

Each July twenty-three citizens of Los Angeles County are sworn to serve as civil grand jurors for twelve-month service ending June of the following year (July 1-June 30). Service is a full-time commitment, 5 days a week and approximately 30 to 40 hours each week with offices located in the Clara Shortridge Foltz Criminal Justice Center in Downtown Los Angeles. A grand juror receives \$60.00 for each day's attendance, plus mileage at the current available rate and free parking.

### **3) What are the functions of the Civil Grand Jury?**

The civil or watchdog, responsibilities of the grand jury encompass the examination of all aspects of the county government, including special districts, to ensure that the county is being governed honestly and efficiently and that county monies are being handled appropriately. The Grand Jury is mandated by law to inquire into the condition and management of public jails. Functions of the Civil Grand Jury include the general business meetings and the committee meetings of the Grand Jury to inquire into and possibly investigate the operation of city and county government and special districts of local government. Valuable information is obtained by meeting with county officials, visiting county facilities and conducting independent research by using the services of an outside auditor. Conclusions of the auditor's findings are developed into recommendations on how to improve county government and public services and ways to

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lacourt.org/division/jury/JR0074.aspx>

save taxpayers' dollars and presented to the Board of Supervisors. At the end of its term of service, the Civil Grand Jury is required by law to submit a final report to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.

**4) Who Qualifies to be on the Civil Grand Jury?**

By law a citizen eighteen years of age or older who has been a resident of Los Angeles County for one year immediately prior to being selected, who is a person of ordinary intelligence and of good character, and who possesses sufficient knowledge of the English language is qualified to be a candidate.

**5) How are Civil Grand Jurors chosen?**

Each year, prior to March 1st, every Superior Court judicial officer in Los Angeles County may nominate two persons who he or she deems qualified to serve as grand jurors. Interested citizens may also apply as volunteers by obtaining a Civil Grand Jury packet from the Grand Jury Office located at 210 West Temple Street, Los Angeles or via this site. From a final list of persons nominated by the judges, forty names and a designated number of alternates are selected by lottery. After these people have been screened by law enforcement agencies, a second drawing takes place and the final twenty-three jurors and a designated number of alternates are drawn. During the first week of July, the selected twenty-three and alternates are sworn in and given a description of their duties and responsibilities by the supervising judge of the Superior Court Criminal Division and their legal advisor, County Counsel.

**6) How is the Civil Grand Jury organized?**

The Presiding Judge of the Superior Court designates the foreperson to preside over all proceedings of the Grand Jury. The newly formed Grand Jury body selects the following officers to conduct general business: foreperson pro-tem, secretary, secretary pro-tem, sergeant-at-arms, sergeant-at-arms pro-tem, and parliamentarian. The County Counsel is the county's principal attorney for civil matters. The County Counsel provides legal services for the county's business affairs. A Deputy County Counsel is assigned as the legal advisor to assist the grand jury in providing advice on legal questions. In situations where the County Counsel has a conflict of interest, the grand jury may then seek legal advice from the State Attorney General

**7) Who may ask the Civil Grand Jury to investigate?**

Any private citizen, county official, or county employee may present a complaint in writing to the Civil Grand Jury. If the grand jurors believe that the evidence submitted is sufficient, a detailed investigation will be held. The Grand Jury does not investigate all complaints received.

**8) How is county government investigated by the Grand Jury?**

The Civil Grand Jury is divided into committees, each of which concentrates its attention on the investigation of certain departments or functions of city or county government, to meet whatever special needs or problems may be confronting the city or county at the time of each new Civil Grand Jury's impanelment. The audit, complaints, and jails committees are considered essential by most Civil Grand Juries because of mandates to audit the county, examine complaints, and inspect the jails. An independent auditor is hired by the Civil Grand Jury to examine the financial records and the methods of operation for specific departments that are selected by the Civil Grand Jury. All committees visit various county facilities, meet with county officials and develop recommendations for improvement. All jail facilities in the county are personally inspected and many improvements have resulted from past Grand Juries' recommendations. At the end of the Grand Jury's term, a final report is prepared and printed with each committee's recommendations and sent to the County Board of Supervisors for response within ninety days. Copies of the final report are distributed to public officials, libraries, and the news media.

**9) How do I request an investigation?**

Any private citizen, government employee, or officer may submit a completed complaint form to request that the Civil Grand Jury conduct an investigation. A Citizen Complaint form is completed to request a Civil Grand Jury investigation. Communications from the public can provide valuable information to the Civil Grand Jury. If the Civil Grand Jury determines that a matter drawn to its attention is within the legally permissible scope of its investigative powers and would warrant further inquiry, the Civil Grand Jury may request additional information. If a matter does not fall within the Civil Grand Jury's investigative authority, or the Civil Grand Jury determines not to further investigate a complaint, no action will be taken and there will be no further contact by the Civil Grand Jury. The Grand Jury has no jurisdiction or authority to investigate federal agencies, state agencies, or the courts. The jurisdiction of the Civil Grand Jury is limited by statute and includes the following:

- Inquiry into all public offenses committed or triable within the county and presenting them to the court by indictment

- Consideration of evidence of misconduct against public officials to determine whether to present formal accusations requesting their removal from office
- Inquiry into the condition and management of public prisons within the county
- Investigation and report on the operations, accounts, and records of the officers, departments, or functions of the county including those operations, accounts, and records of any special legislative district or other district in the county pursuant to state law for which the officers of the county are serving in their ex officio capacity as officers of the districts
- May investigate the books and records of any incorporated city or joint powers agency located in the county.

**10) Where can I find the investigations results?**

The findings of any investigation conducted by the Civil Grand Jury can be communicated only in a formal final report, which is normally published at the conclusion of the Civil Grand Jury's term of impanelment (June 30th). Copies of the final report are available by calling (213) 628-7914 and are also located on this website under Grand Jury Reports:

**<http://www.grandjury.co.la.ca.us/gjreports.html>**